



Managing Stress

To manage stress it is essential to change **what you do** and **how you think**. Increase a sense of control by doing things to change the situation, and reduce catastrophic and defeatist thinking.

CHALLENGE UNHELPFUL THINKING

Feeling overwhelmed during stressful situations? We can learn to change our thinking so that it is more realistic.

When feeling stressed ask yourself: “What am I doing that is making me think I am in danger?”

Examples: “I can’t do this”, “I am unprepared”, or “If I don’t do well, I won’t find a good job”, etc.

Next, ask yourself:

- Am I really in danger?
- Will it really be as bad as I think?
- Are other students in the same situation?
- Can I find a way to cope with this situation and these feelings?
- What advice would I give to a friend? Can I apply this advice to myself?

It is helpful to look for evidence that shows your thought is true, and evidence that shows your thought is not true. This way we can weigh up the facts and determine which is the most realistic interpretation of the event.

EXAMPLES OF MANAGING STRESS

- **Improve Your Sleep Routine:**
Poor sleep worsens anxiety, so a good routine is important. Keep sleep/ wake times fairly regular, and start a pre-bedtime routine (e.g. no devices after a certain time).
- **Exercise:**
Vigorous exercise burns up cortisol (the stress hormone).
- **Time Management:**
Make time in your day for schoolwork so things aren’t done last minute. This ensures that you give 100% when it counts most (e.g. using study schedules to organise study/ break periods, or screen time/socialising as a reward).
- **Balance Study and Life:**
When we get busy, chill-out/fun time is one of the first things to go, but we should really keep this in as it helps us feel less down/anxious/stressed.
- **Relaxation Ideas:**
Reading, listening to music, spending time with friends, having a bath, going to the beach.

PROBLEM SOLVING is a useful skill when experiencing stress. When we feel overwhelmed, it can be difficult to make decisions about the best course of action. Take time to define the problem or issue. Brainstorm all possible options to solve the problem, no matter how silly they may seem. List the pros and cons and evaluate each of your options then rank them from **WORST** to **BEST**. Take action with your best option and see how you go! You can always review and move on to try the next option if needed.